# TJS

# IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

Malcolm K. Williams, Plaintiff,

v.

CIVIL ACTION IURY DEMAND

16

6398

ABM Janitorial Services – Mid-Atlantic, Inc., Thomas Patterson and Harold Geety,

Defendants

## **COMPLAINT**

## I. <u>INTRODUCTION AND PARTIES</u>

- 1. This complaint is brought on the basis of discrimination in employment, hostile work environment and retaliation for engaging in protected activity.
- 2. This complaint involves actions that were taken against Malcolm K. Williams, an individual who resides at the following address: 4345 Brown Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104.
- 3. This complaint involves actions that were taken by ABM Janitorial Services. Its corporate address is 1650 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103. The Defendant employer also has an office at 3940 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104.
- 4. Plaintiff's relationship with the Respondent began in 2004. Prior to 2004, he worked for the Respondent's predecessor, ISS, starting in 1999. Plaintiff was terminated from employment on June 26, 2015.
- 5. For all relevant times, Plaintiff, Mr. Williams, has worked in the capacity of Truck Driver and in the Pan and Broom Unit for the Respondent, as a street cleaner.
- 6. The relief sought is provided under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000e, et seq.), the comparable state law, Pennsylvania Human Relations Act (43 P.S.§ 951-963 et seq.), for the denial of equal protection and treatment in employment terms and

conditions because of Plaintiff's race, for creating a hostile work environment, and for retaliation for opposing perceived discrimination, hostile work environment or other actions believed to be illegal.

## II. JURISDICTION / VENUE

- 7. Jurisdiction for the District Court to hear this action is afforded to the District Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 (Federal Question), 42 USC §1983 and Title VII (42 U.S.C. 2000e et seq.), and 28 U.S.C. § 1343 (3) and (4) (Civil Rights).
- 8. Venue properly lies in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania because the cause of action herein pleaded occurred at the following addresses: 1650 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103 and 3940 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, which is located in the venue established for the District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. Plaintiff's invoke supplemental jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1367 so the District Court can resolve the state pendent and related claims.

#### III. THE PARTIES

- 9. MALCOLM WILIAMS (herein after Plaintiff) is a resident of and has domicile in the County of Bucks, Pennsylvania; she is a governmental employee as intended under Title VII (42 U.S.C. § 2000(e)) and the PHRA.
- 10. THOMAS PATTERSON, (herein after Patterson) is a resident of and has domicile in that jurisdiction which is within the Third Circuit; he is a supervisor with control and authority over the Plaintiff in his terms and conditions of employment with ABM identified in Title VII (42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq.) and the PHRA (not a co-worker); and an individual person/employee as defined under 42 USC 1983 and the PHRA.
- 11. HAROLD GEETY, (herein after Geety) is a resident of and has domicile in that jurisdiction which is within the Third Circuit; he is a supervisor with control and authority over the Plaintiff in his terms and conditions of employment with ABM identified in Title VII (42)

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U.S.C. § 2000e et seq.)and the PHRA (not a co-worker); and an individual person/employee as defined under 42 USC 1983 and the PHRA.

12. ABM Janitorial Services, (herein after Defendant, ABM) is a company operating in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; it is an employer as intended under Title VII (42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq.), and the PHRA and employs over 15 people.

### IV. FACTS

# Background:

- 13. Plaintiff supported a coworker, Armah Konah, who complained of discrimination to the Defendant ABM.
- 14. Since 2011, until the date of plaintiff's termination Konah and Plaintiff were coworkers.
- 15. At this time Konah was upgraded to a truck driver for ABM and Plaintiff was his partner. Plaintiff Williams began noticing that the supervisors were discriminating against Konah.
- 16. The supervisors for all relevant times were Manager Dexter Bryant and Supervisor Thomas PATTERSON. On November 6, 2014 Bryant passed away and Patterson took his place.
- 17. Plaintiff Williams has been disciplined by the Respondent on numerous occasions. Since May 2013, he has been disciplined on at least seventeen occasions by Manager Dexter Bryant and Supervisor Thomas Patterson.
- 18. Plaintiff believes and therefore avers that he was disciplined in retaliation for his support of Konah in his complaints of discrimination.
  - 19. All actions of discipline were unwarranted.

# Complaints and Support of Discrimination:

- 20. In 2011 and 2012, Plaintiff complained to his workers Union about the treatment of Mr. Konah. He also complained to human resources, Bryant and Patterson about the discriminatory treatment including unwarranted write-ups, and work conditions.
- 21. The complaints of discriminatory treatment continued through 2013 including: On October 8, 2013, Plaintiff complained to Mrs. Marlo Simmons, Human Resource Manager, that Bryant and Patterson discriminated and created a hostile work environment against both himself and Konah. Specifically alleging that Patterson continually cursed at Konah on the job, made fun of his accent, and gave them both **unwarranted write ups for leaving their work site.** Patterson constantly **followed Plaintiff to his work sites** which is not typical, and would order him to switch work areas for no reason, just trying to make his walk around more and re-clean his areas.
- 22. On July 21, 2014 Konah filed a complaint of discrimination with the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, which was served on Respondent on August 19, 2014.
- 23. On November 4, 2014, Simmons indicated that Plaintiff's allegations of *discrimination* were investigated but the results were inconclusive.
  - 24. Plaintiff also filed grievances with his union for the write-ups.
- 25. On December 15, 2014 Williams gave a statement to the PaHRC alleging discriminatory treatment of Konah, and retaliation against himself for supporting a charge of discrimination and/or opposing discrimination in the workplace.

#### **Adverse Actions:**

- 26. In 2014, Defendant ABM through the actions of Bryant and Patters took adverse actions against Plaintiff, including but not limited to **removing him from truck duty with Konah**.
- 27. In or about September 2014, Patterson **threatened** that if he doesn't take orders from co-worker they will take him off the truck assignment completely.
- 28. In the fall of 2014, Plaintiff taken off truck and **put back on "street duty**" because allegedly did not respond to orders from co-worker.
  - 29. Late in 2014 Plaintiff was **not supplied with trash bags/supplies.**
- 30. Between 2013 to dismissal in 2015 Plaintiff **received over fifteen write ups for** abandonment, wearing "hoody", and made him check in when going to the bathroom. At one

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point, Patterson told Plaintiff, "Dexter said there's more coming," when he gave him one of the write ups.

- 31. Between 2012 to 2015, Bryant and Patterson followed/stalked Plaintiff while working.
- 32. Bryant told Konah not to communicate with Plaintiff, making it difficult to perform his job duties and assignments.
- 33. Plaintiff Williams never had any problems or write ups before he opposed discrimination against Konah.
- 34. On October 29, 2014 and November 6, 2014, **Patterson issued him written** discipline.
- 35. On November 13, 2014, both warnings were rescinded following union grievances.
- 36. On November 20, 2014, Plaintiff again received unwarranted written discipline from Patterson. Subsequently, the November 20, 2014 written discipline was reduced to a verbal warning.
- 37. June 25, 2015, the date following the union hearing for his grievance, Patterson approached Plaintiff on the street after he had clocked in and said "you are suspended, go back to the office and clock out".
- 38. When Plaintiff arrived at the office, Patterson, an HR representative, and Jamal Fairy were present. He never received paperwork for this suspension. Williams did not return to work after this date. He is currently collecting unemployment compensation.
- 39. Plaintiff asked "who suspended me" and Patterson replied "ask Arman". Plaintiff then went to 40<sup>th</sup> street and Walnut; this was the main office. Mr. Harry Geety then told Plaintiff to return to workshop. Arman and Plaintiff went to workshop, had a meeting with Mr. Geety, who told Plaintiff to turn in his equipment and uniform, and get on floater pool at 1650 Arch st. On June 26, 2015 He again met with Harry Geetie who wrote a hand written letter saying he will "call [him]" when a determination is made. He was effectively terminated from employment on June 26, 2015.

- 40. Plaintiff was given a hearing *based on his suspension*. At the hearing he was asked about write ups, and accused of leaving voicemail saying "nigger". Plaintiff believes that Respondents are in possession of the voice recording but cannot show the number from which it was called. Mr. Konah was not asked any questions.
- 41. Plaintiff lost the Union hearing and in June he ceased to receive employment checks.
- 42. The effective *termination* was upheld for allegedly making racial statements and not being in uniform.
- 43. As a result of the Respondent's discrimination, Plaintiff has suffered damages and requests the Respondent compensate, reimburse, and provide any and all appropriate relief including but not limited to all pay and benefits which would have been received had it not been for Respondents' illegal actions; punitive damages as permitted by applicable law; and the costs and expenses of this action as provided by applicable federal and state law.
- 44. Plaintiff has filed a complaint about the actions described herein with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission on December 17, 2015. Which was dual filed in the EEOC. Plaintiff has received his Right-to-Sue letter on September 22, 2016 which allows him to file this action in federal court.

# V. <u>CHARGES</u>

# COUNT I

Employment Discrimination/Retaliation/Hostile Work Environment Title VII (42 U.S.C. § 2000e) Williams v. ABM

45. Plaintiff incorporates the preceding paragraphs hereto and as though each were repeated verbatim.

- 46. Plaintiff engaged in the following protected activity under Title VII and the PHRA;
  - a. In 2011 and 2012, Plaintiff complained to his workers Union about the treatment of Mr. Konah. He also complained to human resources, Bryant and Patterson about the discriminatory treatment including unwarranted write-ups, and work conditions.
  - b. On October 8, 2013, Plaintiff complained to Mrs. Marlo Simmons, Human Resource Manager, that Bryant and Patterson discriminated and created a hostile work environment against both himself and Konah.
  - c. On December 15, 2014 Williams gave a statement to the PaHRC opposing discriminatory treatment of Konah, and retaliation against himself for supporting a charge of discrimination and/or opposing discrimination in the workplace.
- 47. Contemporaneous or Subsequent to the protected activity, Defendants discriminated and/or retaliated against Plaintiff for engaging in such activity, which actions include but are not limited to;
  - a. removing him from truck duty with Konah;
  - threatened that if he doesn't take orders from co-worker they will take him off the truck assignment completely;
  - c. In the fall of 2014, Plaintiff was taken off truck and put back on "street duty";
  - d. Plaintiff was **not supplied with trash bags/supplies**;
  - e. Between 2013 to dismissal in 2015 Plaintiff received over fifteen write ups,
     including those for abandonment, wearing a "hoody", and made him check in when going to the bathroom;
  - f. On October 29, 2014 and November 6, 2014, Patterson issued him written discipline;

- g. On November 20, 2014, Plaintiff again received unwarranted written discipline from Patterson;
- h. On June 25, 2015 Plaintiff was suspended from employment and was effectively terminated from employment on June 26, 2015.
- 48. The substantial and/or motivating reason for the above mentioned adverse actions was the Plaintiff's race and/or protected activity. Plaintiff was treated differently than similarly situated employees outside of his protected class; Black, or those who did not oppose activity believed to be illegal under Title VII.
- 49. Plaintiff alleges that **but-for** his complaints to supervisors, HR and the EEOC, and/or other opposition to perceived violations of Title VII and the PHRA, Defendants ABM through the actions of Patterson and Geety would not have engaged in the above stated adverse actions.
- 50. The above mentioned conduct was so pervasive that a reasonable person in Plaintiff's position would find the work environment to be hostile. Defendants treatment was severe and/OR pervasive for over two (2) years. Such behavior affected Plaintiff's work environment, increased stress in performing his job duties, increased stress and anxiety outside the work place and caused him to suffer damages, including; loss of sleep and anxiety.
- 51. Defendants failed to take prompt and appropriate action to remedy the situation; specifically, they failed to have a first step meeting to bring the parties together and try and resolve the issues which Plaintiff alleged.
- 52. The ABM has a policy and/or practice, or condones and/or acquiesces to discrimination in employment terms and conditions because of race and/or retaliation for opposing race discrimination or other actions alleged to be discriminatory or which create a hostile work environment, in violation of Title VII (42 U.S.C. 2000(e) et seq.). and the PHRA.

This liability is based off the actions of supervisors Patterson and Geety (branch manager) who have authority to bind the department in their actions.

53. Defendants Patterson and Geety had supervisory authority over Plaintiff's employment terms and conditions, overtime pay, tour of duty, hours of employment, and discipline. Patterson and Geety as supervisors, created and/or carried out the ABM's policy of employment discrimination, hostile work environment and retaliation.

54. Plaintiff has filed a complaint about the actions described herein with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission on December 17, 2015. Which was dual filed in the EEOC. Plaintiff has received his Right-to-Sue letter on September 22, 2016 which allows him to file this action in federal court.

#### COUNT 11

Employment Discrimination/Retaliation/Hostile Work Environment PHRA (43 P.S.§ 951-963 et seq.)
Williams v. ABM, Patterson, Geety

55. Plaintiff incorporates the preceding paragraphs hereto and as though each were repeated verbatim.

- 56. Plaintiff engaged in the following protected activity under Title VII and the PHRA;
  - a. In 2011 and 2012, Plaintiff complained to his workers Union about the treatment of Mr. Konah. He also complained to human resources, Bryant and Patterson about the discriminatory treatment including unwarranted write-ups, and work conditions.
  - b. On October 8, 2013, Plaintiff complained to Mrs. Marlo Simmons, Human Resource Manager, that Bryant and Patterson discriminated and created a hostile work environment against both himself and Konah.

- c. December 15, 2014 Williams gave a statement to the PaHRC alleging discriminatory treatment of Konah, and retaliation against himself for supporting a charge of discrimination and/or opposing discrimination in the workplace.
- 57. Contemporaneous or Subsequent to the protected activity, Defendants discriminated and/or retaliated against Plaintiff for engaging in such activity, which actions include but are not limited to;
  - a. removing him from truck duty with Konah;
  - threatened that if he doesn't take orders from co-worker they will take him off the truck assignment completely;
  - c. In the fall of 2014, Plaintiff taken off truck and put back on "street duty";
  - d. Plaintiff was not supplied with trash bags/supplies;
  - e. Between 2013 to dismissal in 2015 Plaintiff received over fifteen write ups,
     including write ups for abandonment, wearing "hoody", and made him check in when going to the bathroom;
  - f. On October 29, 2014 and November 6, 2014, Patterson issued him written discipline;
  - g. On November 20, 2014, Plaintiff again received unwarranted written discipline from Patterson;
  - h. On June 25, 2015 Plaintiff was suspended from employment and was effectively terminated from employment on June 26, 2015.
- 58. The substantial and/or motivating reason for the above mentioned adverse actions was the Plaintiff's race and/or protected activity. Plaintiff was treated differently than similarly situated officers outside of his protected class; Black, or those who did not oppose activity believed to be illegal under Title VII.

- 59. Plaintiff alleges that **but-for** his complaints to supervisors, HR and the EEOC, and/or other opposition to perceived violations of Title VII and the PHRA, Defendants ABM through the actions of Patterson and Geety would not have engaged in the above stated adverse actions.
- 60. The above mentioned conduct was so pervasive that a reasonable person in Plaintiff's position would find the work environment to be hostile. Defendants treatment was severe and/OR pervasive for over two (2) years. Such behavior affected Plaintiff's work environment, increased stress in performing his job duties, increased stress and anxiety outside the work place and caused him to suffer damages, including; loss of sleep and anxiety.
- 61. Defendants failed to take prompt and appropriate action to remedy the situation; specifically, they failed to have a first step meeting to being the parties together and try and resolve the issues which Plaintiff alleged.
- 62. The ABM has a policy and/or practice, or condones and/or acquiesces to discrimination in employment terms and conditions because of race and/or retaliation for opposing race discrimination or other actions alleged to discriminatory or which create a hostile work environment, in violation of Title VII (42 U.S.C. 2000(e) et seq.). and the PHRA. This liability is based off the actions of co-supervisors Patterson and Geety (branch manager) who have authority to bind the department in their actions.
- 63. Defendants Patterson and Geety had supervisory authority over Plaintiff's employment terms and conditions, overtime pay, tour of duty, hours of employment, and discipline. Patterson and Geety as a supervisors, created and/or carried out the ABM's policy of employment discrimination, hostile work environment and retaliation.

64. On December 17, 2015. Plaintiff filed a charge with the PHRC, alleging retaliation, discrimination and hostile work environment, which was dual filed with the EEOC, so to put individual Patterson and Geety on notice of potential liability under the employment discrimination laws of the United States and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and under federal law for a "aider and abettor" theory of liability.

65. Plaintiff has waited the 180 day allotted time provided by the PHRA which allows her to file this action in federal court.

# VI. PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays the Court enter judgment for them and against the Defendants; to hold the Defendants jointly and severally liable; to award the Plaintiff such relief as to make Plaintiff whole, including such relief as, but not limited to, compensatory, consequential and punitive damages, overtime pay, reassignment, transfer, reasonable attorney fees, litigation costs, and any and all other such relief, including equitable relief, allowed by law or that the Court deems proper and just; including declaring the Defendants acts, actions or omissions to have violated the Plaintiffs' rights.

Date: Per 9-10/6
Respectfully submitted,

BY Malantan

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# PHILADELPHIA COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

# DISMISSAL AND NOTICE OF RIGHTS

To: Alexis Lehmann, Esquire From: Law Offices of Brian Puricelli Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations 2721 Pickertown Road 601 Walnut Street, Suite 300 South Warrington, PA 18976 Philadelphia, PA 19106 PCHR Complaint No.: E14126627 Date of Commission Decision: 09/16/2016 Re: Malcolm K. Williams v. ABM Janitorial Services-Mid Atlantic, Inc. The Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations is closing its file on this complaint for the following reasons Charge Not Substantiated – The PCHR is unable to conclude that the information obtained through our investigation establishes a violation of the Philadelphia Fair Practices Ordinance. This does not certify that the Respondent is in compliance with the Philadelphia Fair Practices Ordinance. No finding is made as to any other issues that might be construed as having been raised by this complaint. Failure to Cooperate – After 30 days in which to respond, the Complainant failed to provide information, failed to appear or to be available for interviews/conferences, or otherwise failed to cooperate to the extent that it was not possible to resolve the complaint. Failure to Locate – Though reasonable efforts were made to locate the Complainant, we were not able to do so. Complaint Withdrawn – The PCHR has complied with the Complainant's request for withdrawal of the complaint referenced above. Lack of Jurisdiction – The facts alleged in the complaint fail to state a claim over which the PCHR has enforcement authority because the Complainant waited too long after the date(s) of the alleged discrimination to file the complaint, the discrimination alleged occurred outside Philadelphia or for some other reason(s). Satisfactorily Adjusted - The parties entered a settlement agreement that provides relief for the harm(s) alleged. Waiver to EEOC – The Complainant has requested that the case be waived to the Equal Employment Opportunity commission for further processing. Right to Sue Requested – The Complainant has requested the right to pursue this matter further by bringing suit in state court against the Respondent. Conciliation – After a finding of probable cause, the parties entered a conciliation agreement that provides full relief for the violations established by our investigation. The complaint will be closed accordingly, but the Conciliation Agreement will remain on file and subject to review by the Commission during the period it is in effect. ☐ Other – Administrative Action. No further action is required at this time. On behalf of the Commission 9/20/16

Date

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The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE REVERSE OF THE FORM.)

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(c) Attorney's (Firm Name A 3 45 B	52 e, Address, and Telephone Number) FOWN St. Phila. PA 1910	04	Attorneys (If Known)		
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# Case 2:16-cv-06398-TIS-Decument 1-Triled 23/12/16 Page 16 of 17 6 398

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DATE BLOC-7-2016 4/100/19(6)1/14/10	N/A
NOTE: A trial de novo will be a trial by july only if there	Attorney I.D.# has been compliance with F.R.C.P. 38.
Leartify that to my browledge the within case is not valeted to any case new services	thin any year proviously terminated action is this court
I certify that, to my knowledge, the within case is not related to any case now parding or wi except as noted above.	man one year previously terminated action in this court
- Dec-9-2011 - 11/11/1/1/11/11	WIA
Attorney-at-Law O	Attorney I.D.#
CIV. 609 (6/08)	in internation to the state of

# Case 2:16-cv-06398-TJS Document 1 Filed 12/12/16 Page 17 of 17 IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

### CASE MANAGEMENT TRACK DESIGNATION FORM

FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

Malcolm Williams ABMI Patterson, Greety

CIVIL ACTION

NO. 16 6398

In accordance with the Civil Justice Expense and Delay Reduction Plan of this court, counsel for plaintiff shall complete a Case Management Track Designation Form in all civil cases at the time of filing the complaint and serve a copy on all defendants. (See § 1:03 of the plan set forth on the reverse side of this form.) In the event that a defendant does not agree with the plaintiff regarding said designation, that defendant shall, with its first appearance, submit to the clerk of court and serve on the plaintiff and all other parties, a Case Management Track Designation Form specifying the track to which that defendant believes the case should be assigned.

### SELECT ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CASE MANAGEMENT TRACKS:

(a) Habeas Corpus - Cases b	rought under 28 Ú.S.C. § 2241	through § 2255.	( )
	equesting review of a decision of a decision of the plaintiff Social Security Be		( )
(c) Arbitration - Cases requir	red to be designated for arbitrati	on under Local Civil Rule 53.2.	( )
(d) Asbestos – Cases involvir exposure to asbestos.	ng claims for personal injury or	property damage from	( )
commonly referred to as	ases that do not fall into tracks (complex and that need special or de of this form for a detailed exp	r intense management by	( )
(f) Standard Management - (	Cases that do not fall into any or	ne of the other tracks.	X
Dec - 9-2016 Date 267-6007298	MAICO/MU//IA) Attorney at law Prose	Attorney for prose	<u>mil</u> 2019
Telephone	FAX Number	E-Mail Address	

(Civ. 660) 10/02